

attempts to justify by reason the friars' hypocritical practice of touching money only with a stick, we feel that he had cause to fear his own weapons.

Such a fear, at any rate, was entertained by the Church authorities, who soon gave their champion to understand that they had no wish to be defended by methods that might be fatal to their own position in the end. Bishop Pecock was brought to trial for heresy in 1457. He was accused of having * rejected the authority of the old doctors,' * saying that neither their writings nor those of any others were to be received, except in so far as they were agreeable to reason. When passages from their works had been produced against him, he had been known to say—" Pooh, Pooh ! " ' He had also published heresies of his own on points which did not interest the Lollards. He was condemned and offered the alternative of recantation or death by fire. He had not, like the Lollard martyrs, a vigorous faith of his own to pit against this tyranny, and he believed too much in the Catholic Church to feel the fierce indignation against his persecutors that might have carried a high-spirited man through the ordeal. He recanted and read a public abjuration at St. Paul's Cross, was deprived of his bishopric, and ended his days in confinement at Thorney Abbey in the fens of Cambridgeshire. The Archbishop gave orders to the Abbot that * he was to have nothing to write with and no stuff to write upon.' It is pitiable to think of this seeker after God, fallen on an age that did not understand him, shut up like a child in disgrace for the rest of his life, the scorn of stupid monks. Both on him and on the Lollards the obscurantist forces, which then ruled Christendom, had descended with crushing weight. Before any good thing could happen in the intellectual life of England it was necessary to break the terrible power thus madly wielded by the Bishops. They blocked the way to all who sought for truth **in** whatever direction.¹

From the trial of Pecock **to** the end of the Wars of the Roses the prosecutions on record are few, though there may have been many of which evidence has not survived. The political troubles probably made the Bishops less active than

* Peeock's *Represser* (B. S*)» Introduction and text. *Diet, of Nat. Biog.*